## Mentoring Makes a Difference for Teachers

### **Best Practices in Mentoring**

**Statewide Mentor Taskforce—December 2005** 



# Mentoring is an intentional process to guide a protégé to proficiency.

"When veterans and novices work together in a nurturing relationship, each gets something of real value from the other. Veterans gain energy; novices gain inspiration. Isolation fades, connection flourishes, pain turns into wisdom – a joyful wisdom that makes the difficulties in our work endurable and keeps both veteran and novice coming back for more."

#### Why Mentoring?

- •To improve teaching performance in order to raise student achievement;
- •To promote the personal and professional wellbeing of protégé teachers;
- •To transmit the culture of the school system to protégé teachers; and
- •To increase retention of promising protégé teachers.

(Adapted from Huling-Austin 1988, as cited in Jonson, 2002, page 8)

Quality mentoring is more than casually matching a new teacher and a veteran teacher, assuming they will meet together throughout the school year and that the protégé will flourish.

#### Quality Mentoring will:

- Focus on student achievement;
- Create intentional/purposeful reflection on teacher instruction and practice;
- Establish a trusting relationship between mentor/protégé;
- Include documented contacts of the mentor/protégé; and
- Retain new teachers in the profession.

#### Characteristics of Quality Mentors

- Has a minimum of 3 years teaching experience;
- Demonstrates expertise in instruction and classroom management;
- Is able to articulate best practice teaching strategies;
- Possesses excellent communication skills;
- Is not a supervisor of the protégé; and
- Is interested in working with a protégé.

## Protégés

Who a school or district chooses to serve as protégés in the mentor/protégé relationship will depend on:

- The goals of the mentor program;
- The number of available mentors; and
- Available finances.

## Who is a Protégé?

- A licensed teacher who is new to teaching.
- A licensed teacher who is new to the school or district; and
- A licensed teacher who has taught in the school or district, but is changing subject areas.

## Recommended Length of Mentoring

- Licensed teacher new to teaching:One to two years.
- Licensed teacher new to school or district: Six months to one year.
- Licensed teacher changing subject area: Six months to one year.

## **Quality Mentoring Programs**

An effective mentor program for Montana schools consists of purposeful mentor/protégé relationships established within a program that includes several essential components.

## Essential Components Of Quality Mentoring Programs:

- Confidential and Non-evaluative
- •Focus on Classroom Instruction and Learning
- Qualified and Trained Mentors
- Intentionalized and Purposeful Structure
- Districtwide Commitment

#### Which leads to:

- Enhanced Teacher Recruitment
- Accelerated Teacher Effectiveness
- Improved Student Achievement
- Increased Teacher Retention
- Positive Collegiality

## Mentor Programs – What they look like...

- The mentor and protégé work in the same building and have scheduled times to meet.
- The mentor and protégé work for the same school district and communicate via phone and e-mail between scheduled visits.
- Mentor and protégé teach the same subject, communicating by e-mail and phone calls.

## Paperwork?

Documentation

Documentation and paperwork should be directly aligned with the goals and requirements of the mentor program.

Documentation can range from little to none, to logging every meeting and its purpose.

A teacher mentor program must not be a stand-alone program, it should connect and work with other school or district initiatives.

## Successful Mentoring Benefits All Stakeholders

Administrators:

Aids Recruitment And Retention Of New Teachers

Protégés:

**Provides Smooth Transition and Ongoing Support** 

Mentors:

**Enhances Professionalism** 

Students and Parents:

Increases Instructional Quality And Consistency

All:

Improves Student Achievement

(Adapted from Creating a Teacher Mentoring Program, NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1999)



- ·Identify Mentoring Needs of School or District
- ·Set Desired Program Goals and Outcomes
- ·Choose or Design Elements of Program
- ·Identify Funding and Incentives/Compensation
- ·Choose Your Mentoring Committee
- · Develop Program Evaluation Rubrics
- ·Organize Resources



Montana has many existing mentoring programs developed by small and large districts, as well as universities. Resources from the Statewide Mentor Taskforce and developed district mentor programs are available on the Teacher Mentor Program Development Template CD.

"The most powerful form of learning, the most sophisticated form of staff development, comes not from listening to the good works of others but from sharing what we know with others....

By reflecting on what we do, by giving it coherence, and by sharing and articulating our craft knowledge, we make meaning, we learn."